Disney's

THE LION KING

A Snake in the Grass

Timon, Pumbaa, and Simba are best friends. Nothing can come between them—except Joka, the python. Hungrily eyeing Timon, Joka decides the only way to get the meerkat on his own is to plant the seeds of jealousy among the friends so that Pumbaa and Simba will leave Timon unprotected. Joka's clever plan works. His friends gone, Timon stands alone. Will he end up in Joka's clutches?

Grolier Books

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SOME SWAHILI WORDS

Afua
to save, pardon, cure

Beba
to carry, transport

Joka
big snake

Pumbaa
to be stunned, at a loss for words

Simba
lion

Disney's

THE LION KING

SNAKE IN THE GRASS

by Leslie McGuire

Illustrations by Laureen Burger
Brooks & Rachelle Campbell
Denise Shimabukuro

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CHAPTER

1

Hey, Pumbaa!" cried Timon, sitting straight up on a log. "Why are most leaves green?"

"Er, uh, I'm not sure," said Pumbaa. He shook his head and grunted. The sun was getting hot, but it was shady under the acacia tree.

Timon, a meerkat, and Pumbaa, his warthog friend, were getting ready for their early-afternoon nap. It was halfway between their after-lunch nap and their late-afternoon nap.

"Leaves are green," said Timon, "because that big yellow thing in the sky puts special green glop on them."

"Wow," said Pumbaa. "That's amazing. I kind of thought it was because the green stuff helps them make food from light."

"Boy, don't you know anything?" said Timon. "That's crazy! Making food from light! Hah!"

"Can I go back to sleep now?" asked Pumbaa.

"Yeah, sure," said Timon. "I just thought maybe you'd like to talk about science or—"

Thump! Crash!

"Oof!" Pumbaa grunted.

The lion cub Kopa had raced through the bushes, jumped over the log, and run smack into Pumbaa's stomach. Nala, Kopa's mother, was right behind him.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa, little buddy," said Timon, hopping on top of Pumbaa.

Nala laughed. "Kopa, you're just like Simba when he was your age."

Simba, the Lion King, was Kopa's father. Nala and Simba had known each other ever since they were cubs. When Simba's father, Mufasa, had been killed, Simba had run away because he'd thought his father's death was his fault. But Mufasa had been killed by his evil brother, Scar, who wanted to be the Lion King.

Timon and Pumbaa had rescued Simba, and they had lived in a jungle far away until Nala had found Simba. Nala had persuaded Simba to take his rightful place as king. Simba had battled Scar and become the new Lion King. Not long after, Nala and Simba had become the parents of Kopa.

Kopa crinkled his nose and sniffed loudly.

"What's bothering you?" asked Nala gently. "Something is wrong."

"Nothing," Kopa said, turning his head away and sniffing again.

"Something's wrong?" asked Timon, hopping down from Pumbaa's back and onto a rock. "What happened?"

"Nothing happened!" Kopa yelled. "And stop asking me all the time!"

"See?" said Nala. "He's grouchy. Something's wrong, but Kopa keeps saying everything is fine. I don't believe him!"

"I'm sure everything is okay," Timon said to Nala. He patted Kopa on the head. "Leave Kopa here with us. I think he just needs to talk about science for awhile."

"Science always cheers me up!" Pumbaa grunted. "I love science!"

Nala turned to Kopa. "Have a good time," she said. She walked away from the acacia tree and headed back across the grassy plain to Pride Rock.

"Just leave it to old Uncle Timon and old Uncle Pumbaa," said Timon, punching Kopa's shoulder. "Sometimes a man needs to talk about stuff with another man, right?"

Kopa rolled his eyes and clamped his mouth shut. He looked disgusted.

Timon sat down facing Kopa. "So what's the problem?" he asked. "You can tell us. Is it a girl or something?"

"Did one of the girl cubs knock you down?" asked Pumbaa. "Your mother always used to knock your father down when they were cubs. Simba got really mad about that."

Kopa looked up, surprised.

"She did?" he said. "I didn't think anyone could knock Dad down."

"Not now," said Timon. "But back then, it was a different story. Is that what happened?"

"No!" said Kopa. "And I don't feel like talking about it. That's all."

"Boy, oh, boy," mumbled Timon. "Our little buddy is not in a good mood."

"Well, sometimes talking about a problem helps," said Pumbaa.

"Just leave me alone!" snapped Kopa. He turned his head and stared at some springbok bouncing across the plain.

A tear rolled down Kopa's face. He sniffed hard and scowled. "Who cares anyway?"

"Not me," said Timon. He folded his arms across his chest. "I only care about grubs and bugs. How about you, Pumbaa? What do you care about?"

"Gosh," said Pumbaa. "I care about grubs and bugs too. But I also care about my friends and the Pride and the leaves and the st—"

"Enough!" snapped Timon. "I care about lots of things too. But I don't go around listing all of them unless somebody asks me."

"But you *did* ask me!" said Pumbaa.

"Stop arguing!" yelled Kopa. "I'll tell you what's wrong!"

CHAPTER

2

Kopa wiped away another tear.

"Kid, you're making me sad," said Timon. "It couldn't be all that bad."

"Yes, it could," said Kopa, taking a deep breath. "You know Afua, my best friend?"

"He's a nice kid," said Pumbaa. "A lion cub like you, right?"

"Well, he's not my best friend anymore," said Kopa. "He's a dope, and I hate him!"

"Slow down a minute," said Timon. "*Hate*'s a strong word. What did Afua do to make you hate him?"

Kopa looked down and started drawing in the dirt with his paw. Then he sniffed again.

"He's stupid, that's all," Kopa said.

"Really?" said Timon, scratching his head thoughtfully. "I don't remember that Afua was stupid last week, do you, Pumbaa?"

"Afua was pretty smart last week," Pumbaa said. "Maybe he ate something that made him sick. Sometimes when you feel sick, you act stupid for a few days."

Kopa shook his head. "That's silly! All Afua wants to do is hang around with Beba. He doesn't want to play with me anymore."

Timon started pacing back and forth. Then he stopped, holding his finger in the air.

"I remember now," he said with a big smile. "Beba is the cheetah cub. He runs all over the place."

"Right," said Kopa. "Afua thinks Beba is the fastest runner and the best climber

and the highest jumper around."

"And what do you think?" asked Pumbaa.

"I think Beba is even stupider than Afua," said Kopa. "And I don't want to play with either of them anyway."

Timon and Pumbaa stared across the grassy plain. They could see the blue African hills far away. It was so quiet, the buzzing of the insects sounded like drums. Pumbaa smiled.

"This reminds me of the time I thought Timon was the meanest meerkat on the planet," he said.

"Oh, boy! I remember that," said Timon with a laugh. He grinned at Kopa. "I thought Pumbaa was the dopiest warthog that ever lived."

"I also thought Simba was just as bad," said Pumbaa.

"My father?" Kopa asked.

Timon nodded. "Nobody was talking to anybody."

Kopa's mouth dropped open. "You

mean all three of you guys used to hate one another?"

"*Hate* doesn't even come close," Pumbaa chuckled. "Timon and I didn't talk to each other for days!"

"And neither of us would talk to Simba," said Pumbaa. "And Simba wouldn't talk to us either."

"Right," said Timon. "When I saw Pumbaa or your dad coming, I wanted to hide."

"That's terrible," said Kopa. "What happened that made you guys so mad?"

"It wasn't our fault," said Pumbaa.

"But we didn't know that," said Timon.

"We didn't do anything wrong," Pumbaa said.

"Yeah, but who knew?" Timon shrugged.

"Slow down," said Kopa. "Somebody must have done something. Best friends never hate each other." He stopped and thought for a moment. Then he said

quietly, "They only do that if one of them does something really, really bad."

"You mean something really bad like what Afua is doing to you?" asked Pumbaa.

"Right," said Kopa. "I didn't do anything to Afua. He's the one being stupid, not me!"

"Are you sure Afua is being stupid?" asked Pumbaa. "It sounds to me as though you're jealous of Beba."

"I am not jealous," said Kopa. "And you guys don't know anything!" He got up. "I'm leaving!" he said.

"I was jealous," Pumbaa said softly.

Kopa stopped. "Jealous? You?"

"I was jealous too," said Timon.

"Of who?" asked Kopa, scowling.

"It was because of that snake, Joka," said Pumbaa.

"He was a big snake," said Timon. "A python." He shivered. "Just thinking about Joka makes me feel creepy."

"Yup," said Pumbaa. "A sneaky

[illegible] not tried to break up our friendship."

"And it almost worked too," said Timon.

"Now sit down and listen," said Pumbaa. "We're going to tell you what happened."

Kopa sat down under the tree.

"Have a grub," said Timon. Kopa took the grub and chewed.

"Simba had been living with us for a few months," Pumbaa began.

"We were the best friends he'd ever had," said Timon. Pumbaa nodded and gave Kopa another grub.

"That day I was alone in the jungle," said Timon. "I was looking as usual, singing a song, doing a dance, playing a little hide-and-seek with the grubs."

CHAPTER 3

Timon heard a rustling in the leaves. He stopped dancing and cocked his head. The rustling stopped. Timon shrugged and began singing.

"Where, oh, where has my little grub gone? Oh, where, oh, where can it be?" Timon lifted a log.

Then he heard the rustling again.

But this time he also heard a hissing.

"Rustling. Hissing," Timon said to himself. "And hissing. At the same time. Not a good sign."

The rustling and hissing stopped. Timon went back to the log. He lifted one end and put his hand under it.

"[illegible] Caught!" [illegible] up a [illegible] and popped it in his mouth. "Good, gooey. One of the minty ones."

[illegible] and grabbed [illegible] beetle. [illegible] against [illegible]. He snapped his head around. Staring through the leaves was Joka, [illegible] python he'd ever seen.

[illegible] tongue [illegible] flick [illegible]. He was [illegible]. The smile was not a friendly smile.

I [illegible] some nasty smiles in my life, [illegible] thought. [illegible]

Still smiling the same smile, Joka stared into Timon's eyes.

"Whoa! [illegible] I'm outta here."

"Not sso fasst," Joka hissed. "Let's talk about what's for lunch."

Timon [illegible]. All he [illegible] was stare back at Joka. [illegible] I gotta scram. I gotta.

But [illegible] have [illegible] [illegible] All [illegible] [illegible] and they were chattering with fright.

Joka [illegible] his head. His eyes were so close to Timon's face that they looked as big as [illegible]. Joka [illegible] and Timon [illegible] felt [illegible] smooth skin [illegible] to squeeze. His mouth [illegible] open.

[illegible] heard roaring. It was Simba [illegible] flying over the [illegible]. He raked his claws across Joka's head. Joka's hold loosened. Timon fell to the ground. Simba [illegible]. Timon [illegible] he was. Then he turned to face Joka.

"[illegible]" Simba snarled. "[illegible] from here. And never come back." He gave a mighty roar.

Joka [illegible] the ground near Simba's feet. [illegible] glared at Simba and hissed. "[illegible] meerkat snack." Joka raised his head. "[illegible] [illegible], [illegible], [illegible]!"

Joka lunged toward Simba. Simba dodged [illegible] more. Simba's claws raked Joka's head. Then Simba leaped [illegible] up. He came down with all four paws and pinned Joka. But Joka twisted out of Simba's grip. With a [illegible] hiss, Joka slithered [illegible] the grass. Timon's eyes rolled up and he fell over in a dead faint.

"[illegible] Timon! Get up!" cried Simba, nudging him with his nose. "Are you okay? Wake up, please!"

"What happened?" asked Pumbaa, rushing into the clearing. "What's wrong with Timon?"

"Oh, man," Simba panted. "[illegible] got here just in time. Some snake was about to eat him! Is he going to be okay?"

"Timon, ol' buddy?" said Pumbaa, [illegible] his shout. "Speak to me! Speak to me! Don't die!"

Timon blinked. He sat up. [illegible] started [illegible] all over.

"[illegible] alive, right?" he asked, looking a little cross-eyed. "I'm not dead, ar

anything like that, am I?"

"[illegible]," said Simba. "You had a close call. That snake almost had you for lunch."

"[illegible]!" said Timon. "That makes me feel sick to my tummy. [illegible] What a disgusting thought."

"You'd better not go out alone like that again," said Pumbaa. He looked around. "That snake might come back. You're my best friend! What would I do if anything happened to you?"

"Even more important, what would I do if anything happened to me?" said Timon, giving himself a shake.

"Okay, here's the plan," said Simba. "If Ituka comes back for his snack, we'll never let Timon out of our sight. We'll stick together day and night."

"Good thinking," said Pumbaa. "That snake in the grass will never get Timon alone. Never."

CHAPTER

While the three friends were walking, Ituka was hanging from a branch over their heads. He heard everything they said.

"[illegible]," Ituka whispered. "I am [illegible] get the little meerkat on his own [illegible] [illegible] get out of [illegible] somebody [illegible] idea."

Ituka coiled himself around the branch. He needed a plan, a good one.

From what they had said, Ituka knew that Timon, Simba, and Pumbaa were the best of friends. And Timon was terrified [illegible] enough [illegible] go [illegible] own.

[illegible] really [illegible] meerkat [illegible] There must be a way."

He kept thinking [illegible] the sun went down and the moon came up. [illegible] in the middle of the night [illegible] He had a plan.

[illegible] make sure they are not [illegible]

First thing in the morning, Joka [illegible] down the tree and looked for Pumbaa. He saw Simba standing [illegible] jumping for grubs.

"Simply perfect," Joka [illegible] staring at a banana tree [illegible]

"A [illegible] good morning!"

Pumbaa jumped.

[illegible] Pumbaa's [illegible]

[illegible] experience [illegible] hog [illegible]

[illegible] know whether to feel [illegible] Joka [illegible] good. [illegible] Joka [illegible] speak softly to Pumbaa.

[illegible] meerkat [illegible] like [illegible]

[illegible] like that [illegible]

Pumbaa was getting [illegible] again [illegible] were stuck in mud.

[illegible]

[illegible] ever talked to me."

Pumbaa stared at the grass. He was supposed to forget something, but he couldn't remember what it was.

A few minutes later, he heard Timon and Simba singing as they ambled through the jungle. Timon was rubbing his hands together.

"[illegible] [illegible] need grubs in the morning," sang Timon. "Bugs, [illegible] and [illegible]."

"That's a good sign," said Simba. "We were worried about you."

"What were you worried about?" asked Timon. "I'm fine. After all, there's nothing like attacking a python and winning to give a guy an appetite. And have I ever got an appetite!"

"Wait a second," said Pumbaa. "I thought the python attacked you."

"Don't be ridiculous," said Timon. "That was only after I attacked him [illegible]."

Simba shook his head. "I think you may have hit your head when you fainted from fright," he said. "Maybe your

memory got a little messed up."

"Absolutely not!" said Timon. "What happened was, I attacked him. Then he attacked me. See, I had the whole thing under control."

"You did?" asked Simba.

"Of course," snapped Timon. "Then you came along and knocked me [illegible]. I'd have [illegible] as a [illegible]."

"If you say so," said Simba. He grinned.

"I'm tough," said Timon. He spun around, pretending he was boxing.

"I need a nap," said Pumbaa. He was still feeling woozy. But he couldn't remember why. He didn't remember [illegible]. All he remembered was suddenly feeling sleepy.

"A nap?" said Timon. "[illegible]"

"Forget the nap. [illegible]," said Simba. "We can [illegible] it?"

"I [illegible]," said Pumbaa. "[illegible] Simba [illegible] anyway because [illegible]

have to wake up," grumbled Pumbaa. "If a python came after me, I'd probably sleep through the whole thing."

Pumbaa looked hurt. He said, "I guess you won't miss me, will you?"

Simba and Timon walked to the mud hole. [illegible] scattered to the ground from the tree and followed them.

"So, how come the mud is so cool?" asked Simba.

"I dunno," said Timon. He jumped on Simba's back and looked around. "Where do you think that snake is?"

"Don't you wanna talk about something else?" asked Simba.

"No," said Timon. "Could it be behind that tree?"

"What?" asked Simba.

"I'm worried," said Timon. "Are you sure you don't see that snake?"

"I'm beginning to think you only want me around as a bodyguard," said Simba.

"Don't be silly," snapped Timon.

"But you said that Pumbaa was the

and [illegible] Timon [illegible] along with [illegible] Simba heard a rustle in the leaves.

"Help!" Timon squeaked. "That [illegible] is out there. I heard him! Save me!"

Simba whipped around. But all he saw was a swaying vine.

"I was right," Simba said. "You only want me as a bodyguard."

Timon looked [illegible] then he grinned at Simba. "What makes you think that?"

Simba glared at him. "No one is [illegible] enough!"

"Who cares?" said Timon, jumping off Simba's back. "Let's go!" He ran ahead but kept looking over his shoulder to be sure Simba was following him.

Simba walked slowly, growling softly.

"All according to plan," hissed Joka, smiling. "It won't be long before that friendship is over."

CHAPTER 5

The next morning, Joka found Simba lying on a rock in the sun. "Hello, [illegible] I have some interesting news. I heard Timon tell Pumbaa that he doesn't like having you around. But he needs you as his bodyguard. [illegible]"

Simba growled and Joka slithered away.

A little while later, Joka found Pumbaa scratching his back on a tree. "Hello," [illegible] "Did you know I heard Timon say he'd rather be with Simba than with you? It must be true because they go everywhere together."

Pumbaa glared at [illegible]oka and marched off.

No one noticed. Toka stalked off to find his friends. He rustled the leaves to scare Timon. This made Timon grumpy and cranky. Pumbaa and Simba started to think it was true that Timon couldn't stand them.

Pumbaa didn't want to believe what Toka told him, but he still felt jealous of Simba. Simba kept wondering if Toka had been telling the truth, and he was jealous of Pumbaa. Timon was mad at both of them because he thought they were [illegible] him [illegible] longer. By bedtime nobody was talking to anybody.

But a good night's sleep makes everything look better. The next day when they were all at the mudhole, Pumbaa picked up a clot of mud and asked, "What makes mud act like this?"

"Mud is special magic stuff that is easy to find in wet places," said Timon. "It's a kind of like bugs, but it doesn't taste good."

"I thought mud was just regular dirt that got wet," said Pumbaa.

"That's what I thought, too," said Simba.

"You only think that, Pumbaa, because you don't know anything about science," said Timon. "It's a good thing you have me to explain how things work. You'd never figure it out on your own."

"That's not true," said Pumbaa. "I'm not dumb, you know!"

"Oh, really?" said Timon. "Well, you sure act dumb enough sometimes."

"I wish you wouldn't say things like that to me," Pumbaa said. "You're not my best friend anymore!"

Pumbaa waddled off into the jungle.

"He'll be back," Timon said, yawning and stretching.

But the day went on and Pumbaa didn't come back. Every time Timon heard a noise in the jungle, he would look up.

Finally Timon got tired of waiting. "Let's go look for him," he said to Simba.

go over to the waterfall.

"I'm worried about Pumbaa," said Simba. "He should be here when we get back."

"[illegible] he'll be coming back. If not, [illegible] though. That's not the best friend around."

"You don't mean that," said Simba.

"Maybe I do and maybe I don't," said Timon. "But it doesn't matter. Pumbaa will come back when he's ready. In the meantime, you know, we can go any place, unless [illegible] want to go to the waterfall."

"We've been [illegible] standing around," snapped Simba. "You don't really want me to be your friend. You just want me to protect you. You don't like anyone but yourself."

"That's not true," [illegible] Timon. "I never said [illegible] be my best friend. [illegible] the waterfall with me."

"You mean [illegible] care about me [illegible]

[illegible] care about Pumbaa?" asked Simba.

"Well, I do care about Pumbaa," [illegible] Timon. "It's just that he doesn't care about me anymore."

"Well, I care about Pumbaa," said Simba, "and I'm going to go find him. I miss him, and I want us all to be together."

"Yeah, but he [illegible]," said Timon.

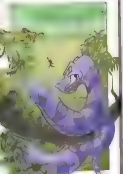
"Yeah, but nothing," said Simba. "[illegible] always [illegible] I gave him a good [illegible]."

And with that, Simba stalked off into the trees.

"Wait," yelled Timon. "Don't leave me alone! Come back!"

Simba didn't [illegible]. Timon could hear him stomping through the leaves. Soon he couldn't hear anything.

"[illegible] a spooky place [illegible] here," Timon whispered to himself. "In fact it's so quiet, it's creepy."



He walked over to one side of the clearing. Then he walked back to the other side of the clearing.

"Pumbaa?" he called out. "Simba?"

No one answered. He looked around to be sure. *Hmmm.* Timon jumped like [illegible] the grass to the [illegible] Simba [illegible] be waiting.

Where was that python anyway?

CHAPTER

6

Pumbaa was sitting on the bank beside the waterfall. Timon had said he was dumb. Pumbaa didn't think he was dumb. Just because he didn't know all the things Timon knew didn't mean he wasn't smart.

The more Pumbaa thought about it the sadder he felt. After all, sometimes Timon did things that were dumb, too. But Pumbaa would never pick on him because of it.

He heard a sound behind him.

"Timon?" he asked, thinking his friend had come to apologize for being so mean. He was hoping Timon would tell him he was sorry for what he'd said.

"I have some news for you." Zoka was hanging from a branch, swinging back and forth. He was smiling a happy python smile.

Pumbaa stood up and pawed the ground. "Get away from me!"

"Don't worry," said Zoka. "I'm not going to eat you. As I said, warthogs are bad for my digestion. I have a message from your little meerkat friend."

"No kidding?" said Pumbaa. "Why should I believe you?"

"That's up to you."

"What did he say?" asked Pumbaa. He hoped he would hear that Timon wanted to make up.

"Not much," said Zoka. "Your little friend says he doesn't care whether you ever come back. He says he [illegible] better [illegible] now."

Zoka smiled again and slithered up into the leaves.

His head hanging, Pumbaa walked to the waterhole. It was bubbling and splashing and gurgling cheerfully. Pumbaa felt very uncheery. He wanted to cry.

Maybe I should sing a song, Pumbaa thought. The trouble is, I can't think of any good ones. Timon is the one who thinks up all the good songs.

Pumbaa sat for a while, his head between his hooves. He looked at his leg. It was covered with mud, he thought. Maybe I'll get in the water, he thought. Then he slumped to the ground.

"Nobody cares whether I'm muddy or not," he said out loud. "Why bother getting washed?"

Meanwhile, Simba had looked everywhere for Pumbaa. He had gone to all the places Pumbaa liked. He'd gone to the hollow, the tree-stump grub nest, the shady log, and the swinging vine. He'd gone all the way to the edge of the jungle. But Pumbaa was nowhere to be found.

Simba sat down to think where else he

might search. He yawned. Nap time. He began to climb a tree so he could stretch out on a branch. Something soft and shiny was already up there.

Ioka!

"Get out of here," Simba snarled.

"Why so hostile?" hissed the python. "I'm only here with a message from your little meerkat friend."

"Oh, really?" said Simba.

"Your little friend wants to tell you that the warthog was back," said the python. "He always wants to tell you they don't want to see you anymore. You're no longer their friend."

Ioka smiled another happy python smile and slithered down the tree and into the jungle.

Simba [illegible] Ioka [illegible] helped a bit. But he missed Timon and Pumbaa. What fun would he have without them? He wouldn't have anyone to sing songs with or eat grubs with or splash in the waterfall with.

He began to pace. Something Ioka had said bothered him. He didn't know what it was, but something was wrong.

Simba went over [illegible] Ioka had said.

"That's it!" he [illegible]. "Ioka said Timon wanted him to tell me that the warthog was back!"

Simba thought again. [illegible] Timon would never call Pumbaa "the warthog." He called him "Pumbaa." The snake [illegible] Timon never gave him a message at all.

Simba's [illegible] Why would Ioka [illegible] He knew the answer. Ioka had tried to eat Timon once before. Simba had [illegible] Pumbaa that he would protect him [illegible] never leave him alone.

[illegible]," Simba groaned. "That python's going to eat Timon. And I helped set the trap."

CHAPTER

7

Timon piled a bunch of sticks in a heap. "If that crazy python shows up, I'll throw these at him. I got an arsenal."

A parrot flew by, flapping its wings, and Timon jumped, dropping a stick.

"On the other hand," mumbled Timon, "I could hide under the pile."

Another parrot flew overhead, screeching like the first one. Timon grabbed a big stick.

"But I'd rather be up a tree," said Timon, dropping the stick.

He headed toward the biggest tree. Oh, no! The snake. Kaa was hanging down from the lowest branch.

"Well, hello there, little meerkat," [illegible] said Kaa. [illegible] wonderful [illegible] the [illegible] a greater [illegible]

"Oh no, no!" shrieked Timon, backing up as fast as he could, right into the mudhole.

Kaa slithered down the tree and across the clearing until he was staring at Timon.

Timon was afraid to look Kaa in the eye. He remembered what had happened the last time.

[illegible] very small [illegible]," Timon thought. [illegible] couldn't move a muscle.

He eyed his pile of sticks.

[illegible] big stick [illegible] stick out of the nose [illegible]

Timon crossed his arms [illegible] Kaa came closer, a very happy grin [illegible] on his face.

Timon grabbed the biggest stick from the pile. Kaa kept moving closer. "You [illegible]

yum," he said.

[illegible] thought Timon. He ran to the right. Joka cut him off. He ran to the left. Joka cut him off again.

"Can't run," Timon said to himself. "How about a hole in the ground?"

Timon started digging. Joka kept on coming, an even happier python smile on his face. Joka coiled himself around Timon, squeezing at the same time.

"[illegible] it not," wheezed Timon. "Leggo of me, [illegible] you!"

But Joka kept smiling and squeezing. "I can't wait," he said.

Timon heard a crashing in the leaves. Pumbaa burst into the clearing.

"Drop him!" yelled Pumbaa. He charged Joka. Pumbaa tried to spear Joka with a tusk. But Joka kept twisting to put Timon in the way of Pumbaa's tusks.

"I'm afraid I'll spear Timon by accident!" Pumbaa said to Timon.

"And I'm afraid Joka will keep squeezing [illegible] can't breathe any more," said Timon, gasping for air. "Take that, you wimp!" Timon squeaked. He pulled an arm free and hit Joka on the head with his fist.

"Hee-hee-hee! You're tickling me!" Joka said.

Timon heard a snarl.

"Simba!" he squeaked. Simba leaped into the clearing and landed in front of the python. He bared his teeth. "Let go of my friend now!" he snarled.

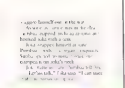
"Why should I?" hissed the python.

"Because if you don't," said Simba, "we will have one of the best snake steak lunches ever served in the jungle."

With that, Pumbaa charged Joka and pushed him back against the tree trunk. This time Pumbaa pinned Joka [illegible] his tusks so the python couldn't move.

Simba leaped and landed next to Pumbaa. With a sweep of his paw, he clawed Joka.

Hissing loudly, Joka [illegible]. Timon fell to the ground. [illegible]



[illegible] himself out of the way.

As soon as [illegible] was on the [illegible] Pumbaa snapped his head around and hooked Joka with a tusk.

Joka wrapped himself around Pumbaa['s] [illegible] and began to squeeze. Simba opened his mouth [illegible] and clamped it on Joka's neck.

Joka [illegible] and Pumbaa fell free.

"Let's talk," Joka said. "I can see [illegible]

[illegible]

"Now I made a little mistake," Joka whined. "[illegible] I promise [illegible] hold a grudge. No hard feelings, right?"

"No hard feelings at all," said Simba. "In fact, [illegible] walk, don't you?"

[illegible]

CHAPTER
8

"Gosh!" Kopa gasped. His eyes were wide open. "What happened next?"

"After that, it was a piece of cake," said Timon. "Your father carried that lying python down to the ravine and dropped him over the edge."

"Yeah," said Pumbaa. "Then Timon threw some rocks in to make sure he got the message not to come back."

"Did you guys make up then?"

"We sure did," said Pumbaa. "But not right away. My feelings were still hurt."

"He still wasn't sure Joka had been lying to him," Timon said with a chuckle.

"Simba had figured out the python was lying to him. But Pumbaa was still afraid I only wanted to be friends with Simba."

"So how did you figure out what went wrong?" Kopa asked Pumbaa.

"I knew I had to hear those words from Timon's mouth," said Pumbaa. "Just because some python said them didn't mean they were true. That's why I had come back. It was lucky I got there in time to save him."

"Yeah, I remember it to this day," said Timon. "He said even though I thought he was dumb, he didn't want our friendship to be over. But if it was really over, he had to hear me say it."

"We'd been buddies too long for me to leave forever because of rumors," said Pumbaa.

"Guys can get mad at each other, but that doesn't mean they're going to be mad at each other forever," said Timon. "I told Pumbaa I still liked him and wanted him for my friend."

"So then what happened?" asked Kopa.

"The same thing that was going on before," said Pumbaa.

"First we went swimming," said Timon. "Pumbaa still needed a bath."

"I always need a bath," said Pumbaa. "I don't like 'em, but I need 'em."

"And we ate a bunch of those fat grubs that night to celebrate," said Timon. "It was a regular feast."

"And we talked about science and friendship and trust," said Pumbaa. "Because after that python had lied to us, we learned that friendship is based on trust."

Kopa sat still for a while. Then he said, "I guess maybe I should go talk to Afua."

"That would probably be a good idea," said Timon.

"I mean, Afua may not know he's hurting my feelings when he says that Beba is better at everything than I am."

"That's true," said Pumbaa. "And

besides, what does it matter if Beba is good at some things? You're good at some other things that Beba isn't good at, I bet."

"And just because someone is better at things than you are doesn't mean they're better at being a best friend than you are," said Timon.

"That's right!" said Kopa. He looked more cheerful. "I'm going right now!"

"Going where?" asked Nala. She walked up to Kopa, but he was on his way.

"Hey, see ya, Mom!" Kopa yelled over his shoulder.

"He seems much happier than when I left him here," Nala said.

"Nothing like some deep science talk to cheer a guy up," said Timon.

"What was the problem?" asked Nala.

"Nothing the cub can't handle," said Pumbaa. "Just a little disagreement between best buddies, if you know what I mean."

Nala smiled. "I know exactly what you mean," she said. "Thanks for your help."

"Piece of cake," said Timon. "That's what friends are for, right?"

Nala gave Pumbaa and Timon each a kiss. "That's what uncles are for too."

After Nala was gone, Pumbaa sighed and rolled over on his back. "Yeah, I'd almost forgotten about that lying snake."

"Not me," said Timon. "The elephant is big, and the meerkat is small. But neither ever forgets a friend—or an enemy."

"I have to say that I have never lost my trust in you," said Pumbaa with a yawn. "In fact, I think I trust you more than I trust anyone. I even bet I trust you more than you trust me."

"Are you kidding?" snapped Timon. "I definitely trust you more than you trust me! In fact I trust you so much that—"

"Whadda you mean?" Pumbaa gasped. "How can you say that! I trust you more

than you'll ever know! In fact, it hurts my feelings to hear you say that!"

"Say what?" argued Timon. "If you think for thirty seconds that your trust is greater than mine, well, then, you have another think coming, bud! I bet—"

Pumbaa turned his back. Timon stamped his foot.

"I never thought I'd see the day when you called my trust into question," said Pumbaa with a moan.

As she strolled down the path, Nala heard the two friends arguing. She smiled and shook her head. She knew nothing could come between true friends for long.